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On the Ecology of the Unicorn

"Unicorns aren't real. And if they were, they'd kill you" - apocryphal

Nomenclature: Unicorns, Holy Steeds,

Description: Pure white horses with a single horn atop their head.

Things that are known:

- They are always white
- They have horns
- They are known to shift through space
- They are immune to charms and enchantments
- They are susceptible to the charms of young women

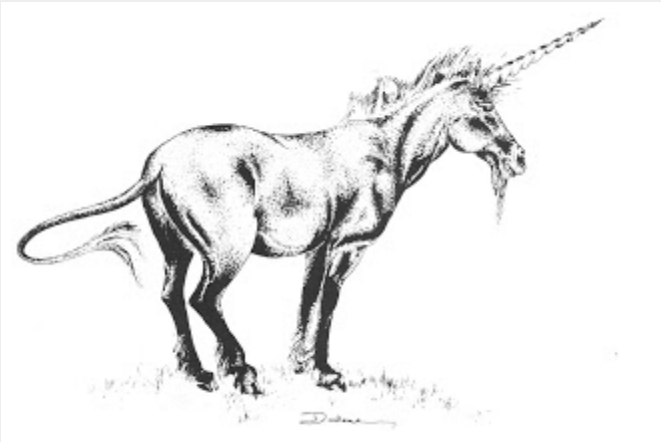
Rumors and other whispers in the dark:

- Unicorns gain their power from the chaste and pure of heart. The bond they form with a holy individual, such as a virgin or paladin is for life
    - However if they should succumb to sex or sin, the unicorn becomes mad with rage. It looses it's horn, its hair turns black, its hooves burn with hatred, and it hungers for flesh, becoming a nightmare.
- Unicorns are a special type of fairy shapeshifter, that can only reproduce with virgins. They gain their trust and intimacy, often by playing hard to get, and then bed them, consensually or not.

- It is as it says, the unicorns need maiden riders. This is wondrous when it begins, but once bonded from the unicorn, they are separated from the realm of man. Tending constantly to the needs of another fickle creature, loneliness, and the need to hunt evil begin to wear. The youth given to the maiden rider from the unicorn begins to become a heavier and heavier weight every year. Eventually the riders become hostile, bitter, and weary.
- A unicorn is a dream of instability and madness, more powerful then you and completely unpredictable.
- Unicorns are warlike fey, sustained by bloodshed, righteous fury, and fanatical zeal.
- Their alliances with paladins are not out of a desire for justice, but merely made as the most expedient way to shed the blood of the guilty.
- Some Unicorns are even said to use their allies to not only create warlike churches of justice, but also nests of evil creatures, to ensure that there will always be vengeance to be had.
- Unicorns are pre-pubescent centaurs. They are only into virgins until they undergo puberty, a rather traumatic metamorphosis involving a great deal of wine drinking and celebration in lost and hidden caves.
    - There is a rumor that their centaur torso is the torso of the one virgin they eventually deflower, but it is much more likely that bacchus himself shapes their form.
- Unicorns are the dreams of virgins seeking aid, their desire to escape giving form to spirits in the wild. They exist beyond the call, but cannot properly breed. Such a breeding of Unicorns might be possible, but has yet to be accomplished.
- Unicorns must drench their horn in the blood of a pure maiden, once a year or their powers are lost.
- A true unicorn horn is pure platinum. That's why they are no longer found. Bone horns come from fish. Any new sightings are either lies or a sure sign of an invasion.
- Unicorns don't need virgins, so much as they need women who have rejected men.
- The unicorns are horses, infected with a brain worm. This worm spends its first life stage as an egg in the soil of a cemetery, but once hatched it crawls up on the tallest blade of grass it can find and lies in wait hoping to be swallowed by a suitably large herbivore. Most herbivores know this and will not willingly feed in a cemetery, but horses can sometimes be led there and forced to feed by unknowing masters.
    - Once eaten, the worm lodges itself in the brain. It develops a large horny proboscis which protrudes from the hosts forehead
    - It needs a human brain, and one filled with zeal, preferably laced with innocence and suppressed desires. Thus, it will be drawn to virgins and paladins. It will remain with its intended next host, testing it to see if its brain will be a truly delectable treat and its body a suitable host, all the while using its rather powerful psychic abilities to create suitable chaos and danger.
    - Once the host is found suitable, the fabled "horn" will be used for its intended purpose, leaving the horse body vacant and dead and the new host body almost intact apart from a ruptured ear canal. The creature will now revel in the last and shortest stage in its life by influencing its new host to abandon all former principles and fall to hedonism and debauchery (coincidentally the unicorn will be gone at this point, furthering the theory that unicorns will abandon unworthy masters). Soon, the host will meet his or her fate somehow, at the hands of the law or through an act of despair, and will be buried in a nearby cemetery, its brain case ripe with eggs...
- The souls of great saints become angels. That is a fate out of reach of the nice lady down at the corner market. Occasionally, however, their wishes will find a place upon death, becoming a

brilliant white horn on the forehead of a stallion or mare. The horse then seeks others who remind them of the horn giver, pure and compassionate.

- Just as clerics channel the power of their god into Prime, so does the unicorn channel cosmic power. The horn is an intricate multi-dimensional array that reflexively converts power. This makes it very sensitive to auras and vibrations from intent and mindset. The presence of intense selfishness or delight in pain causes feedback that stings in the unicorn's bones.
- Salvressa Greengoat was a powerful druid who was mocked by wizards. They claimed they could weaponize animals to serve them in destroying their foes, and she could only use them "out of the box" as it were.



  - She decided to prove them wrong. She thought of the most painful experience she had ever had, and she decided to incarnate it. She remembered the penetration and disillusionment of her first sexual experience, and she projected it out into a steed.
  - First, the light and the cuddling and the freshness of idealism. Then the puncturing, and the pain as a construct of what romantic love is contrasts with the rutting and grunting and abandonment of mating. The piercing pain, physical and emotional. And she unleashed it on the world.
  - Salvressa Greengoat was never famous for her monster making (and this was her only attempt.)
- Voskohr the Defenestrator is an evil lich with a thousand windows in his multi-dimensional tower. The only way in is to insert a unicorn horn into the door lock, and each horn only works once. He figures if someone wants an audience with him, they had best be prepared to slaughter something pure to even get a foot in the door.
- Drunk fey at revels decided they would do away with the rider as they imitated jousts the humans hosted. They put the lances directly on the horses. It did not work out. Surviving unicorns became disapproving icons of probity and virtue, considering themselves object lessons in the pitfalls of drunken animal-tampering.
- The unicorns horn isn't horn. It's actually pure magical energy. It's why the horse is white and so difficult to hit, the energy repels nearby materials.
- For that matter, the unicorn isn't an actual horse. It's just magical forces, swirls and whorls of energy, and shapes more strange that all float together in the approximate shape of a horse. The body is like the tail of a coat, dragging along the ground.
- The Thickwood is impossible to navigate, intentionally. Brambles coat everything, climbing trees and spreading across the ground. They release fog that eats firelight. The only way through is to follow the glimmer of a unicorn's coat, and the shine of the light its horn projects. They were created as guides to carry the allies of the fey through the darkness.
  - When the Thickwood was destroyed and the ground it once covered was salted and burned, surviving unicorns were faced with a crisis of purpose. They decided to take their role as guides metaphorically, and they sought out those hemmed in and befogged and led them to clarity and safety.
- A unicorn's bones are stitched with sigils that collect and concentrate emotions--namely righteous wrath and compassion. The horn is capable of either directing a release of pent-up energy, or conducting a tracery of a multi-dimensional glyph that gives form to those energies.
- Orcus had a phalanx of wicked goat mounts, shaggy and topped with skirling cathedrals of bone horns. A few of these defected one of the many times Orcus was (temporarily) slain. Their new patron, a forest goddess, fused and straightened their horns and granted them light and grace. They are intense rivals with their former kin.

- An entire cult of Orcus, the Crooks, has as its purpose the ambition of discovering whether a hybrid of unicorns and devil-goats will yield something useful to their master. So far, no success staging experiments; unicorns can apparently die at will.

- The horn of a unicorn can cure any disease. It may also infect you with parasites that have odd effects.
- Each unicorn has glyphs inlaid in its horn that reveal a prophecy uttered by their divine patron. These can only be read after the horn is separated from the unicorn and given special treatment--unless the diviner has a healthy dollop of fey blood and the approval of the sponsoring god.
- The city state of Belleraes has some really weird morality laws involving sex out of wedlock and legal marrying age. Many a visitor has fallen afoul of their castrating carpet-knives and twisted legal system. This culture was shaped by about five centuries of a fad among the nobility. Every legitimate noble had to have unicorn decorations, and at least once a year eat the meat of unicorns.
    - Every part of the unicorn was used; bones for end tables and writing desk inlay, hair for pillows and helm crests, eyes dipped in glass and inserted in statues or head trophies, hide for clothes or upholstering loveseats, marrow for Virtuous Salsa, and so on.
    - Unicorns have been out of style for at least three hundred years, but laws passed to ensure virtue and virgins are still on the books and existed long enough to shape this society indelibly.
- Unicorns focus on virgins because "purity" is the same as "unmixed." They need naivety, people whose ideas have not been challenged and shaped by conflict with other ideas. They need spirits that have not deeply twined with other spirits. They are avatars of loneliness, colorless and solitary. Compromise is their poison.
    - Because of this, their minds project a flickering "horn" of singularity that can penetrate anything.

Special Unicorn Attacks

- **Horn Parry**: The unicorn may make a saving throw versus petrification when it charges. On a successful save, it is able to deflect any weapon set against a charge.
- **Rear up**: The unicorn can forgo an attack with its horn, and instead rise up on it's hind legs to attack with its hooves. The attack does normal damage but if both hit, an extra 2-12 damage is done and the target must save versus petrification or be knocked prone.

The ecology series is a crowdsourced series of articles, and contributors can be found on google+ under the hashtag #crowdecology. They are limited posts, but following me on G+ will allow you to see them. All artwork is credited where the artist could be found. Classic ecology articles from Dragon magazine are used both for reference and inspiration; the whole impetus of the idea was to create 'classic' ecology articles that are actually useful. Let's Read the Monster Manual by Noisms is also a source of inspiration. If you're curious how to make effective use of these articles, read On the Use of Ecology.

You might also like:

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Posted by -C at 11/27/2013 07:00:00 AM

Labels: Ecology

2 comments:

grodog November 27, 2013 at 10:36 AM

Lots of fun ideas ideas in here, -C! Thanks! :D

Allan.

Reply

-C March 16, 2015 at 2:50 PM

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